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## ON THE SONGS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOTHIC, OR TEUTONIC RACE

**T**HE character of a people is faithfully expressed in their popular songs. It has been truly observed of such compositions, that, like the pulsation and breathing, they are the sign and measure of the inward life.—

A number of circumstances concur in forming the character of a people. The nature of the government, the nature of the country, their occupation, their religion, and a variety of other particulars, have necessarily more or less influence on their habits and modes of thinking and feeling. Much, however, also must be conceded to depend on the natural and original temperament of a people. It is this which disposes them more to the reception of one set of impressions than another; and thus accounts for

the habits which grow up among them in their social infancy. The sanguine temperament of the African Negro, and the cold and phlegmatic temperament of the American Indian, will always, under all circumstances, so long as these two races of men shall remain unmixed, ensure an essential diversity in their character.—The races of Europe do not, indeed, afford such a marked contrast; and the intercourse of nations, every day becoming more intimate, has a tendency to wear down and soften original distinctions: still, however, we perceive tribes, or families of people, in Europe, which the common observer feels convinced at a first glance, must have proceeded from essentially different stocks. For instance, the nations

of the Gothic, or Teutonic race—namely, the Scandinavians, and the people of their dependent islands,—the Upper and Lower Germany (including Swiss, Alsatians, Flemings, and Dutch,)—the English and Lowland Scots,—not merely speak branches of one common language, but have a strong family likeness, both in features, complexion, and figure, and in character and disposition :—while the Celtic race again, differs strongly from the former, not merely in language, but in all the other particulars just enumerated.

The prevailing character of the Teutonic nations is obtuseness of the senses, or tardiness in receiving sensual impressions ; sincerity and singleness of disposition ; constancy and perseverance in pursuit.—Their appearance and movements are heavy, and ungraceful. But from their constancy in pursuit, and their power of dwelling long on one object, they have reached greater excellence in certain important branches of knowledge and acquirement, than people of a more quick and mercurial disposition.—Though their want of delicacy of tact may prevent them from ever becoming the greatest painters or statuary, they have produced a Copernicus, a Kepler, a Tycho Brahe, a Newton, a Bacon, a Hobbes, and a Leibnitz.—They have planted themselves in the wildernesses of the new world ; and, by patient labour, converted them into flourishing communities : while the French, Spaniards, and Portuguese, in similar situations, have yielded to circumstances, and either trifled away their time on the spot where they first planted themselves,—or become savages with the natives. The colonists of the former in Russia and Poland, have displayed the same perseverance. From their sincerity of disposition, and their freedom from distrust and jealousy, they are peculiarly adapted for acting in union.

The intercourse between the sexes has always been of a more elevated character with them, than with any other race. Tacitus expressly states, that of all the barbarians known to the Romans, the Germans alone entertained a high regard for women ; and this regard dis-

played itself, in the middle ages, in chivalry,—an institution which flowed naturally out of their character—and the circumstances of the times.

To gaiety, in the genuine sense of the word, they are strangers. In their mirth, as in every thing else, they are deficient in ease ;—their wit, which is often forcible, has seldom a spontaneous appearance, but usually that of effort. Even their language is stamped with the directness and sincerity which belongs to their character. It was justly observed by Leibnitz, that a person writing or speaking in one of the Teutonic languages, with a view to conceal his meaning, will find it more difficult to succeed in his object than if he used any other tongue. It was a *Frenchman* who observed, that language was given to man to *conceal* his thoughts !

The points of difference between the Teutonic and the Celtic race are obvious to the most superficial observer. The Celt is of an ardent and impetuous temperament ; rapid in all his movements ; quick in his perceptions ; he has a keen intuitive glance, and naturally expresses himself in bold figurative language. He is, at the same time, much more fickle and inconstant, and much less cordial and sincere. If more sensible to kindness, he is also more prone to anger and revenge than his Saxon neighbour.

The song and music of the Celts are also quite distinct in character from those of their neighbours. The poetry is bold and figurative ; and the ardour of a warm and enthusiastic imagination boils over on every object within its reach. The music is animated and impassioned in the highest degree ; the strains are at times absolutely heart rending. Sir Walter Scott in *Marmion* has happily described the character of the pathetic Celtic airs :—

The air he chose was wild and sad ;  
Such have I heard in Scottish land  
Rise from the busy harvest band,  
When falls before the mountaineer,  
On Lowland plains, the ripen'd ear ;—  
Now one shrill voice the notes prolong,  
Now a wild chorus swells the song :  
Oft have I listen'd and stood still,  
As it came soften'd up the hill,  
And deem'd it the lament of men  
Who languish'd for their native glen ;

And thought how sad would be such sound  
 On Susquehana's swampy ground,  
 Kentucky's wood-encumber'd brake,  
 Or wild Ontario's boundless lake,  
 Where heart-sick exiles in their strain  
 Recall'd fair Scotland's hills again !

The song and the music of the Teutonic race are of quite a different cast.—And of these the Germans have fewer of what may properly be called genuine old ballads than the English or Danes. Yet among the peasantry of the different provinces of that extensive country, a number of characteristic ballads and songs are current, many of them handed down from the remotest ages.—The following extract from a ballad of the Black Forest, taken down from the recitation of a female peasant, seventy-six years old, translated almost literally, reminds us strongly of the ditties of our own peasantry. The ballad is called Earl Frederick ; the subject of it is the murder of a young woman by Earl Frederick ; because his mother would not consent to his marrying her. He goes, notwithstanding, to bring her home, and in conducting her

He draws from his sheath his gleaming sword,  
 And stabb'd his maiden most piteously ;  
 " Now know I that she's sure to die : "  
 Then he drew out his shirt so white,  
 And in the wound he dipp'd it strait,  
 The shirt was colour'd red all o'er,  
 As if it had been wash'd in gore :  
 Into the court he then did ride,  
 Bearing with him his wounded bride ;  
 To meet him out his mother run,  
 " You're welcome home again, my son,  
 With thy young bride so wan and pale—  
 O why then is thy bride so pale ?  
 And why too are her looks cast down,  
 As if with child she had been gone ? "  
 " Now mother hold thy tongue, I pray,  
 And speak not in this cruel way ;  
 It is no child that makes her pale,  
 She has receiv'd a deadly wound."—

This tragic wedding, the death of the bride, the slaughter of Earl Frederick by her father, and the roses and lilies that grew out of the graves of the two lovers, form a popular subject with the peasantry in different parts of Germany, and many various versions of the ballad are current.

Bürger, one moonlight night, heard a peasant girl sing an old German song, of which three lines remained engraven

on his memory ; but, notwithstanding all his efforts, he was unable afterwards to obtain any trace of it. There is a complete copy of this curious ditty in the *Wunderhorn*,—of which the following is a close translation :

The stars beam in the sky,  
 The moon it shines so bright ;  
 How quick the dead do ride !

Open the window, love !  
 And let me in to thee ;  
 I cannot long here be.

The cock already crows,  
 It chaunts to us the day,  
 I dare no longer stay.

Far, far, have I ridden,  
 Two hundred leagues of way !  
 And still must ride to-day.

O dearest heart of mine,  
 Come get thee up behind,  
 The way thou'lt pleasant find !

Yonder, in Hungary Land,  
 A little house have I,  
 Thither my way doth lie !

Upon a wide spread heath,  
 My house is ready made,  
 For me and for my bride.

Let me no longer stay !  
 Come quick my love, come, come,  
 And let us to our home.

The little stars us light,  
 The moon it shines so bright,  
 How quickly ride the dead !

Now whither wilt thou take me,  
 O God what canst thou mean,  
 All in the darksome night !

With thee I cannot ride,  
 Thy little bed's too strait,  
 And too far is the gait.

O come and lay thee down,  
 Sleep, my love, sleep away,  
 Until the judgment day.

The following ballad, among others, is given by Jung, in his biography :

At Kindelsberg, on the castle high,  
 An antient lime-tree grows,  
 With goodly branches, wide outspread,  
 Which rave as the wild wind blows.

There stands a stem, both broad and tall,  
 Quite close this lime-tree behind ;  
 It is grey, and rough all over with moss,  
 And it shakes not in the wind.

There sleeps a maiden the mournful sleep,  
 Who to her knight was true ;—  
 He was a noble count of the Mark,  
 Her case she well might rue.—

## THE KNIGHT AAGE.

With her brother to a distant land

To a knight's feud he did repair ;

He gave to the maiden the iron hand,

They parted with many a tear :

The time was now long past and gone,

The Count he came not again !

By the lime-tree foot she sate her down,

To give vent to her sorrow and pain .

And there to her another knight came ;

A coal-black steed was he on,

Unto the maiden he kindly spoke,

And sought her heart to win.

The maiden said, " thou shalt, I vow,

Me for thy wife ne'er have ;—

When the lime-tree here shall wither'd stand,

My heart to thee will I give !"

The lime-tree still was high and young,

Up-hill and down he pass'd,

In search of a lime so large and so high,

Till he found it at the last :

Then out he went, in the moonshine bright,

And dug up the lime-tree so green,

And set the wither'd tree in its stead,

And the turf laid down again.

The maiden up in the morning rose,

Her window was so light ;

The lime-tree shade no more on it played ;

She was seized with grief and afright !—

The maiden to the lime-tree run,

Sat down with sorrow and pain,

The knight he came, in haughty mood,

And sought her heart again :—

The maiden answer'd, in distress,

" Thou'lt ne'er be lov'd by me."—

The proud knight then he stabbed her dead.

The Count griev'd piteously !—

For he came home that very day,

And saw, in sorrowful mood,

How by the wither'd lime-tree lay

The maiden in her blood !

And then a deep grave did he dig,

For a bed of rest for his bride,

And he sought for a lime up-hill and down,

And he plac'd it by her side.

And a great stone he also plac'd,

Which by the wind cannot shaken be ;—

There sleeps the maiden in peaceful rest,

In the shade of the green lime tree.

A volume of *Tragica*, or old Danish historical Love Songs, was published in 1657 ; and a hundred ballads were added, by Peter Syv, to Vedel's collection, in 1695.

Some of these ballads have been introduced with considerable effect, by Oehlenschläger, in his Dramas. In his Tragedy of Axel and Valborg, which is itself founded on a popular ballad, he introduces that of

It was the Knight Sir Aage,

He to the island rode ;

He betroth'd Lady Else,

She was so fair a maid ;

He betroth'd Lady Else,

All with gold so red,

But on the Monday after

He in earth was laid :

It was the Lady Else,

And she did wail and weep,

The Knight, Sir Aage heard her,

Under the earth so deep ;

Uprose the Knight, Sir Aage,

Took his coffin up behind,

And hie'd him to her chamber door,

His Lady fair to find :

With the coffin he knock'd upon the door,

Because he had no skin,

" O rise up Lady Else

And let thy Aage in ! "

Then answer'd Lady Else,

" I will not ope my door,

Till thou repeat Christ Jesus' name,

As thou couldst do before !"

" O rise up little Else,

And open thou thy door ;

I can the name of Jesus name,

As I could do before."

Then up rose the proud Else,

The tears fast down did flow,

And in she let dear Aage,

For whom she felt such woe ;

And then she took her golden comb,

Wherewith she comb'd his hair,

And for every hair she redded,

She dropt a bitter tear.

" Now, hear ye Knight, Sir Aage,

My dearest love, O say,

How was it under the black earth,

In the grave where you lay."

" Every time thou merry art,

And in thy mind art glad,

Then pleasant is my grave to me,

All round with rose leaves clad ;

" But every time thou grievest,

And in thy mind art sad,

My coffin then it seems to be

All filled with clotted blood.

" But now the red cock croweth,

I can no longer stay,

To earth now hurry all the dead,

And I must take the way.

" And now the black cock croweth,

To earth must I descend,

The gates of heaven wide open are,

And I must quickly wend !"

Upstood the Knight, Sir Aage,

Took his coffin up behind,

And dragged it on to the church yard,

Painful he did it find ;—

And now the Lady Else,  
Her heart it was right sad,  
She went on with her Aage,  
All through the darksome wood ;

She went with him all through the wood,  
And into the church yard,  
And then the Knight, Sir Aage, .  
Lost the hue of his yellow hair ;

And as he came to leave the yard,  
And into the church sped,  
O there the Knight, Sir Aage,  
Lost the hue of his cheeks so red ;

“ Now hear thou little Else proud,  
Hear me my dearest dear,  
See that thou never more do weep,  
For thy betrothed here ;

And cast thine eye to heaven up,  
And little stars aboon,  
And thou wilt thereby come to know,  
How the night passeth on.”

She cast her eye to heaven up  
And to each little star ;  
Into the earth the dead man slipped,  
She never saw him more !

Now home went Lady Else,  
Deep sorrowing all the way,  
And on the Monday after.  
She lay in the dark clay.

The belief in **ghosts** follows naturally from the belief that we do not wholly die ; and the most that the reason of an enlightened age can say on the subject is, that allowing a continuation of our existence, in some shape or other, we know not whether the nature of that existence does or does not allow of an intercourse between it and the mortal life. There is a difficulty in supposing an identity of affections ; and men in a rude age, naturally cling with fondness to the idea, that, as the old affection is continued, the disembodied spirit will not be subjected to a restraint, debarring it irrevocably, from all means of communicating with the object of its regard. Those who witness the separation of two lovers by the hand of death, can hardly avoid picturing to themselves a renewal of the intercourse so sadly disturbed ; and hence the idea of such ballads as we have last noticed, must be almost perpetually floating in the mind, and as extensive by diffused as human feeling.